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If you believe you are eligible to vote and encounter difficulty registering, please contact the Elections Division of the California Secretary of State:

California Secretary of State  
Elections Division  
1500 11th Street  
Fifth Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 657-2166 (voice)  
(916) 653-3214 (fax)  
[www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections.htm](http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections.htm)

If the California Secretary of State is unable to help you, or to report a problem, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Voting Section, Rm. 7254 - NWB  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
(202) 307-2767 (voice)  
(800) 253-3931 (toll-free)  
(202) 307-3961 (fax)  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt)

*This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only, as an aid to further inquiry. The laws in many states are revised frequently, and may have changed since this pamphlet was issued. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are lawfully eligible to vote, and criminal penalties can result from voting when ineligible or making false statements on a registration form.*

Issued December, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division



# Restoring Your Right to Vote



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The right to vote is an important civil right in a democracy as well as a civic responsibility, and yet many persons who have been convicted of a crime do not know whether they are eligible to vote. For both federal and state elections, the right to vote is controlled by the law of the state in which you live. Some states restrict the right to vote for persons who have been convicted of a crime. This pamphlet is intended to help you determine whether you are eligible to vote in the state in which you live, and if so, what steps you must take to be permitted to vote.

### **What law governs whether my felony conviction limits my right to vote?**

The impact of a criminal conviction on the right to vote varies widely from state to state. Whether you can vote after being convicted of a crime is determined by the state in which you live, not the state in which you were convicted.

### **Can I vote while I'm incarcerated in California?**

If you are a resident of California, and you have been convicted of a felony, you cannot vote while you are imprisoned or on parole. If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in California, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot in your home state. You need to consult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

### **I have been released from incarceration. How do I restore my right to vote?**

Your right to vote is automatically restored upon completion of a sentence of imprisonment, including any period of parole.

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### **What if my conviction was for a federal crime?**

If you are a resident of California, the same rules apply whether you were convicted of a federal or state crime.

### **What if I was convicted in another state?**

The same rules apply for California voters even if the conviction occurred in another state.

### **What happens if I move to another state?**

If you move to another state, your right to vote will be controlled by the laws of that state.

### **What are California's other voter registration requirements?**

To vote in California, you must be a citizen of the United States, be a resident of California, be at least 18 years old by the date of the next election, and not be deemed "mentally incompetent" by a court.

### **When do I need to register to vote?**

To be eligible to vote in an upcoming election, you must register at least 29 days prior to the election.

### **Where do I go to register?**

You may register many ways in California, including:

- at any local election office in any city or town
- at any registration event you encounter anywhere in California
- at the Department of Motor Vehicles

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- most post offices and libraries have mail-in registration forms
  - a form can be sent to you if you call 1-800-345-VOTE
  - through the Internet  
[www.ss.ca.gov/elections/voteregl.html](http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/voteregl.html)

Registration may also be available at other state service agencies. Contact the county elections office near you to find out which service agencies provide voter registration.